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Nixon taken off critical list, keeps improving

LONG BEACH, Calif., (AP) — Former President Richard M. Nixon was taken off the critical list Sunday for the first time in six days. He continued to show increased strength since a brush with death brought on by post-operative complications.

"It's his best morning since hospitalization began," Nixon's physician, Dr. John C. Lungren, said in his daily medical bulletin.

Lungren said through hospital spokesman Norman Nager that the 61-year-old former chief executive began a soft food diet and would sit up later Sunday for the first time since entering the hospital for treatment of phlebitis Oct. 23.

Nixon had been fed intravenously during the critical period, until Saturday when he was first allowed to take consomme and gelatin.

Lungren said Nixon was now in "sub-intensive care," which he described as "a step down from critical care." The next less serious condition would be "intermediate care" but there was no indication when Nixon might be put in that category.

Nixon slept at intervals Saturday night, Lungren said. He described his patient's vital signs as normal.

Lungren said the blood clot in Nixon's left leg, which forced urgent surgery last Tuesday morning, had not enlarged.

The doctor said Saturday that internal bleeding near Nixon's abdomen had been stopped and the former president had received no blood transfusions since Thursday.

Connie Hamilton, director of critical care nursing at Memorial Hospital Medical Center, described Nixon as "physically quite ill" during a briefing to newsmen on a change in the nursing arrangement for Nixon.